

# Aqualate Mere National Nature Reserve

This 210 ha magnificent wetland reserve is leased and managed by Natural England from the Aqualate Estate. Wildlife can be viewed in close quarters from the public observation hide.

Situated 3km to the east of Newport, at the heart of a private estate, and almost completely hidden from the outside world lies Aqualate Mere - the largest natural lake in the West Midlands. Surrounding the mere are extensive reedbeds, low lying woodlands dominated by alder and willow, fen meadow and wet pasture, together forming a complex of habitats which support a fantastic variety of wildlife. Aqualate Mere National Nature Reserve is a superb place to watch wildlife and learn about wetland habitats in the West Midlands.

## The Mere

The mere is the largest open body of water in the west midlands and is over 1 mile long however the mere is remarkably shallow at an average depth of less than 1 metre. The Mere itself is a depression in the sand and gravel scoured out by the retreating glaciers which has then in filled with freshwater. The mere supports a diverse fish population, in particular pike and bream, which attracts the



Goldeneye

© Tim Colshaw

## Aqualate Mere National Nature Reserve



Front cover photograph:  
Aqualate Mere and Esker  
© Mel Brown

occasional hunting Osprey. Another summer visitor to Aqualate are Hobbies chasing dragonflies emerging at the edge of the Mere. Large numbers of wintering and breeding wildfowl use the Mere. Up to three thousand duck maybe present on the Mere in the winter months, mallard, teal, wigeon, pochard, tufted duck, goldeneye, and gadwall are generally the most numerous but historically Aqualate has always been important for its wintering shoveler. Aqualate Mere supports a large heronry that has been on site for over 300 years. Mammals found using the Mere here include otter and water vole and Daubenton's bats.

## The Esker

The Mere and the surrounding landscape were formed by retreating glaciers towards the end of the last ice age (approximately 30,000 to 10,000 years ago). Rare and important Esker deposits are found to the north and east of the mere, these are large sand and gravel banks deposited by a glacial melt-water river. The Eskers are nationally rare and important geological features. The esker today supports an oak and sycamore dominated woodland with bluebells in May and is home to a variety of mammals including badger, fox, polecat, stoat, and yellow necked mouse.



Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

ISBN 978-1-84754-294-6 Catalogue Code: NE405

Natural England publications are available as accessible pdfs from:  
[www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications)

Should an alternative format of this publication be required, please contact our enquiries line for more information: 0845 600 3078 or email [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk)

Printed on stock comprising 75% recycled fibre.  
[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

This note/report/publication is published by Natural England under the Open Government Licence for public sector information. You are encouraged to use, and reuse, information subject to certain conditions.

For details of the licence visit [www.naturalengland.org.uk/copyright](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/copyright)

Natural England photographs are only available for non-commercial purposes. If any other information, such as maps or data, cannot be used commercially this will be made clear within the note/report/publication.

© Natural England 2013



Starling Murmurations over Aqualate Mere

© John Wickstead



Exmoor Pony and Foal and Grazing Galloway Cattle

© Mel Brown

## Reedbeds

Another eel feeder and relative of the heron, found at Aqualate, is the Bittern. This shy and rare bird is a regular winter visitor to the reedbeds. Another shy inhabitant of the reedbed is the Harvest Mouse. The reedbed habitat surrounds the Mere and is up to 40m thick in places, this supports breeding reed warbler, sedge warbler and reed bunting with the occasional visiting Marsh Harrier. The site also sees large murmurations of Starlings at dusk in the winter months which use the reedbeds overnight.

## Rush Pasture

The low lying rush dominated pastures at the east and west of the reserve provides breeding areas for wading birds such as lapwing, curlew, snipe and redshank. Hunting barn owl and buzzard are also seen regularly over these fields. The rush pasture towards the west of the reserve contain scarce species such as meadow rue, ragged robin and marsh arrow grass. The flora of the ditches and dykes is exceptional and includes large populations of water violet along with greater spearwort and tubular water dropwort.

The rush pastures are grazed by cattle belonging to neighbouring farms and by Natural England owned herd of Exmoor Ponies and Galloway cattle.

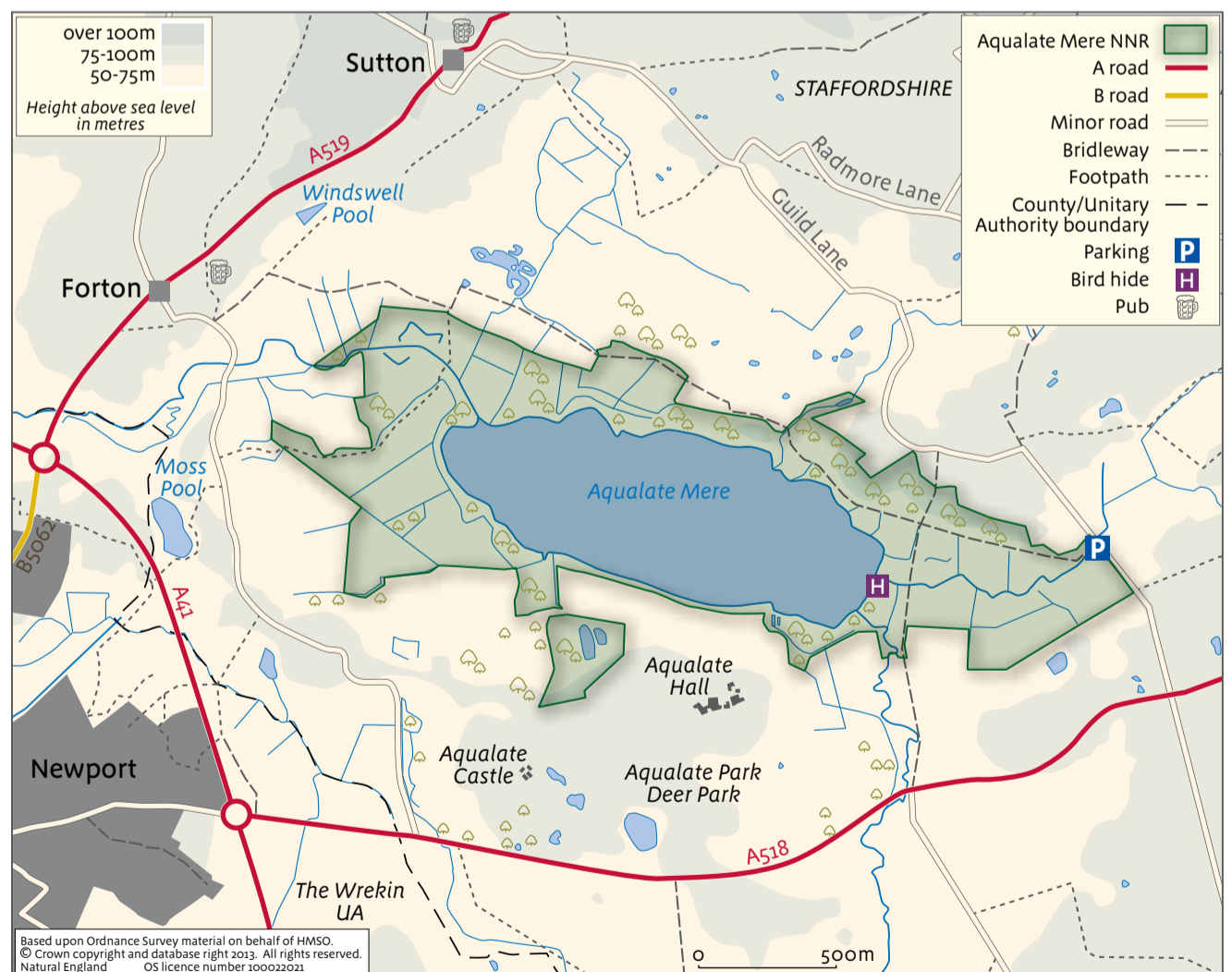
## Management

Management of the reserve is necessary to maintain the wetland habitats. The reedbeds which fringe the mere require invading willow and alder to be removed to prevent drying out and active management is also required in the woodlands. In the rush pasture grazing animals



Frozen Aqualate Mere

© Mel Brown



## Access

The reserve is traversed by a series of footpaths and bridleways which give good views of most of the site. In addition, the Mere and its wildlife can be observed at close quarters from the public observation hide at the east end of the Mere. Please note that, apart from public rights of way and the hide, access to the reserve is limited to permit holders only. The hide is suitable for wheelchair

users and can be accessed from the public car park along an easy access way marked public right of way. Whilst on the reserve please keep dogs on leads and close all gates behind you.

For more information on the NNR and for our annual guided walk programme please contact the Reserves Manager on 01952 812111 or visit Natural England's website [www.naturalengland.org.uk/nnr](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/nnr)